

Identifying Kids Who Struggle **and What You Can Do To Help**

Given that you, as program staff, spend so much Out of School Time with the kids, you are in a prime position to help them. They look up to you and your attitude can help alter their attitude about school and school work.

If kids are struggling with school work, especially reading and with math, we want to know as soon as possible. We don't want them to get to middle school and not be able to read grade level materials. We don't want to realize a fourth grader can barely read at all. Since you are here with the kids and since you have a relationship with them, you are the ones who can find out who is having a hard time and do something about it!

Identifying Kids Who Are Having A Hard Time:

When working on Homework or Academic Assignments

- Pay attention to the kids who ask a lot of questions: it might be that they really don't know where to start or what to do next but it also might be a matter of confidence (Some of you might be familiar with the kids who raise their hand for you to come over but once you're there, can pretty much do the work on their own. You can help them boost their confidence)

- Keep an eye on the kid or kids that never ask any questions, they just work quietly. This might be coming over and taking a look at their paper to make sure they are working and their work is accurate. With some kids you might need to watch a little bit to see them doing any work. If might also involve asking them how its going or asking them to show you how they answer the next problem

 - > this way you are making sure they are actively doing their own work correctly, instead of just looking it over at the end

- Pay attention to who kids are sitting next to and how they interact. If someone doesn't have a lot of confidence in an area they might always sit around the same people so they can 'double check' their answers. This could be a sign that they don't really understand the material. Don't be afraid to ask kids to move to a new spot

When Kids are Independently Reading

- When kids finish a book and come select a new one, ask them about what they read. If they can tell you a good deal about the book or story, they probably have a good grasp of it. This means they would include the characters, setting, beginning, middle, and end.

- Look for kids who spend a long time picking a book to read. This is a reading avoidance behavior: taking up as much time as they can with other things instead of actually reading. They might look at a lot of different book covers one at a time or take a stack to their spot and continue looking at them. They might pick one book up, flip through it for a few minutes without really

reading, then set it down and look for another book.

- Look out for kids who are reading books that are clearly too hard or too easy for them. This might be a second grader reading a long complex chapter book or a fifth grader reading a simple picture book. (I can jump, I can ride, etc) We want kids to be reading books that they can read and understand on their own but still challenge them a little (just right books)

- If someone is particularly chatty during quiet independent reading time, it can be distracting to others in addition to keeping them from what they should be doing. Ask this person to move to a different spot away from others.

- If you're wondering if someone is really reading, quietly ask them to read aloud to you. They should be able to read a page with 5 mistakes or fewer. Ask them about what they are reading: Who is the book about? What happened during to the characters? What do you think is going to happen next?

Good Practices for Helping Youth with Academics

Tips for Helping with Homework

If youth need help solving a problem:

- ☐ Ask, "What do you do to start?"
- ☐ Show them how to solve the problem that they are having trouble with
- ☐ Work through the problem step by step together
- ☐ Watch them do the next problem independently, supporting them as needed

When you find incorrect answers while looking over completed work:

- ☐ Ask, "Can you tell me how you got this answer?"
- ☐ Ask, "Why is (incorrect answer)?"
- ☐ Rephrase what they are saying into a question to help them notice their mistake

-> As educators we want kids to learn to "self-monitor" or notice when they made a mistake and do something about it. If we ask these types of questions enough, we can start to help kids as themselves these questions- and become more independent workers

When looking over writing:

- ☐ Have you read out loud what they wrote
- ☐ If you find mistakes ask them if they see or hear something wrong with the sentence
- ☐ Ask how they will fix it
- ☐ Guide them to the right answer
- ☐ Let them write the correct answer

- When kids are writing, encourage them to spell on their own. Tell them to stretch out the word and write the sounds they hear (home /h/ /o/ /m/ and remind them of silent e)

-When asking kids to tell you about what they read or got out of a text use "5 finger summary"
Somebody (main character) somewhere (setting) wanted a problem to be solved.

- As you learn which kids struggle in particular areas, make a point of checking in on them during their work time or homework time. Ask them how it is going and make sure they are doing their work.

-> As kids build confidence, they perform better. You are in a great position to help kids build confidence. At the end of work time when you check in with that kid who struggles, complement them if they worked really hard- even if they didn't complete the assignment. You are in a position to notice and highlight when they are really trying. Really making an effort and doing your best work on a task are more important than just getting it done.

- Speak up when someone does a really nice job. If they worked really hard during work time or finished a hard homework assignment, let them know you're proud of them. Also, encourage them to take pride in their work. "I'm really proud of how hard you worked today, are you proud of yourself? Does it feel good to know that you finished this whole [math page, book, assignment] on your own?"